

Inspection of a good school: St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, Bolton

Kentford Road, Halliwell, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 2JL

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, Bolton continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Matthew's achieve well. Teachers have high aspirations for the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are happy at school. They enjoy their learning and they want to succeed.

Pupils enjoy receiving awards when they demonstrate the school values of love, friendship, respect and creativity. They know that staff expect them to behave well. Leaders have a consistent and effective approach to tackling any incidents of bullying. As a result, pupils feel safe and confident to be themselves in school.

Pupils benefit from a range of experiences that enrich their learning and bring it to life. For example, when learning about Roman Britain, pupils visited Chester to view the Roman remains and dressed as Roman centurions. Through the strong personal development programme, pupils learn about independence, teamwork and resilience. This helps pupils to develop into effective learners.

Staff offer a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for pupils, such as sing and sign, craft, general knowledge and sports clubs. Leaders make sure that these clubs are accessible to all. As a result, a large proportion of pupils take part in additional activities to develop their talents and interests.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have designed a curriculum that enables pupils to connect their learning across subjects. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Leaders have identified clearly the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn. Leaders take appropriate steps to ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teachers are supported well to develop their subject knowledge. For example, they work collaboratively to design learning opportunities for pupils that are stimulating and accessible, including in early years. That said, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not check sufficiently well on pupils' learning. As a result, occasionally, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. This hinders these pupils' learning in these subjects.

In early years, leaders prioritise the development of children's language and communication skills. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary. Leaders ensure that children have a range of opportunities through which to consolidate their understanding of number, for example by hiding numbers and shapes in the sandpit for children to find and sort. This helps children in early years to make strong progress.

Leaders do all that they can to promote a love of reading, for instance through developing an inspirational indoor woodland library. This hosts pupil and parent and carer reading sessions for all year groups throughout the year, as well as reading lessons for every class. Leaders have implemented an effective curriculum to teach pupils to read. Staff are well trained and follow a systematic approach that enables pupils to build their phonic knowledge. Leaders ensure that those pupils who find reading more difficult or who speak English as an additional language receive suitable support to catch up with their peers. As a result, pupils develop into fluent and enthusiastic readers.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. They ensure that classrooms are positive and supportive environments. In early years, staff help pupils to adapt quickly to the routines and expectations of school. Leaders help staff to tackle any challenging behaviour. As a result, pupils' learning is rarely interrupted by others.

Leaders have identified that the attendance of some pupils needs to improve. They have introduced rewards to celebrate and encourage regular attendance. Leaders offer appropriate support to pupils who do not attend regularly. Despite this, some pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

Leaders ensure that there are many opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. They make sure that pupils learn about British values, such as democracy, tolerance and respect. For example, pupils have many opportunities to represent their class on the school council and have a voice in the running of the school.

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify pupils with additional needs. They work with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils with SEND get the support that they require. Leaders are sharply focused on supporting the large proportion of international new arrivals who join the school each year. They ensure that these pupils quickly develop the language that they need to access the curriculum. Consequently, pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language learn well.

Leaders and governors fully evaluate all aspects of the quality of education that pupils receive. Teachers appreciate the care and consideration that leaders have for their workload and well-being. Staff value the training and development opportunities that leaders facilitate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a clear system to report and record concerns about pupils. Staff have received comprehensive safeguarding training that is relevant to the school's context. They are vigilant to the signs that a pupil may be experiencing difficulties or is at potential risk of harm.

Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the timely support that they need. Leaders are proactive in seeking help and advice from experts.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in the local community and in the virtual world. They are also taught what to do if they have any concerns or worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not check whether pupils learn and remember new knowledge as effectively as they should. As a result, from time to time, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge that hinder their subsequent learning. Leaders should ensure that they support teachers to assess the learning of pupils in these subjects accurately.
- Too many pupils are absent or persistently absent from school. This has a negative impact on their learning and progress. Leaders and governors should ensure that they improve these pupils' rates of attendance.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	105205
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10212405
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Strout
Headteacher	Kay Ritchie
Website	www.st-matthews.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection report, there have been changes to the leadership team, including a new headteacher and a new chair of the governing body.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- Governors provide childcare in the form of a breakfast club, which is open to all pupils every morning before the start of school.
- This school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in February 2023.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, and a range of staff. She also spoke with members of the local governing body, as well as a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.

- The inspector spoke to pupils in all year groups about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. She observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to understand how pupils are kept safe.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers and pupils about pupils' learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed children reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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